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ABSTRACT

A study asked selected high school principals to respond to statements about the value of high school journalism to the high school student and about the rights and responsibilities of the high school journalist. These responses were then checked against such information as whether or not the high school principal had worked on a high school publication and how the principal valued that experience. Subjects were 43 high school principals (a response rate of 67%) from communities in the central and north central sections of Iowa selected so that all the principals represented high schools where there is a certified journalism teacher. Questionnaires which covered demographics, questions about the school, the journalism program and the principals' own high school journalism background, the value of high school journalism to the high school student, and the rights and responsibilities of the student journalist (and also asked the principals to evaluate the statements on a 5-point scale) were mailed to each principal. Results indicated that years as a principal cannot be used to predict a principal's response to the rights of the student journalist; knowing whether the principal worked on a high school publication can help predict how the principal values high school journalism 20% of the time; knowing how principals rate their own high school publication experience can help predict how they value high school journalism today 16% of the time and how supportive they are of high school student rights 10% of the time. (Seventeen tables of data are included.) (RAE)

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High school principals and the high school journalism program

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A paper submitted to the Secondary Education division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication midwinter meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida, January 1989

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Abstract

High school principals and the high school journalism program

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Having a positive working relationship with the high school principal has always been important to the high school journalism teacher, but perhaps never as important as in the post-Hazelwood days. Hazelwood has underscored the importance of having a strong editorial policy and set of guidelines for working with the principal and the school district.

This paper asks questions about working with the high school principal. Are there things about the principal we should know before we enter into negotiations? Can we better understand how the principal will respond to issues facing high school publications?

The study reported here asked selected high school principals to respond to statements about the value of high school journalism to the high school student and about the rights and responsibilities of the high school journalist. These responses were then checked against such information as whether the high school principal has worked on a high school publication, how the principal valued the experience, and others.

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The high school journalism teacher's working relationship with the high school principal has always been an important one, but perhaps never as important as in these post-Hazelwood days (Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier, 1987). Hazelwood East High School's principal, Robert Reynolds admits that he is not a journalist and calls what he did when he pulled two controversial stories from the school's newspaper being an umpire who has to make a tough call (Jacobs, 1988).

Reynolds's tough call was followed by another tough call by the U.S. Supreme Court. The decision brought many articles from various fronts giving high school publication advisers advice on how to operate in the Post-Hazelwood era. Mark Goodman of the Student Press Law Center in Washington, D.C., for example, said that schools not already having publication policies should adopt one. Ken Siver, of the Journalism Education Association said that students working on publications need a good editorial policy and set of guidelines worked out with the school board and principal.

But what about working with high school principals on policies and guidelines? What should we know about high school principals before we enter into negotiations with them? Are there things about principals that will help us predict how they might react to certain situations? This paper hopes to suggest some questions and answers that could be useful to journalism educators in their dealings with high school principals.

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Methodology

The measurement instrument is a questionnaire mailed along with return envelope and cover letter to high school principals in selected communities in Iowa. The communities in the central and north central sections of Iowa which were selected were chosen so that the high school principals represented high schools where there is a certified journalism teacher.

The questionnaires were mailed in October 1986 and follow-up letters were sent four weeks later. The response yielded 42 of 63 high school principals for a 67 percent rate of return. The questions asked included demographic information, information about the school, the journalism program, and the principals own high school journalism background. The second part of the questionnaire included statements about the value of high school journalism to the high school student and the rights and responsibilities of the student journalist and asked the principals to evaluate the statements on a 5-point scale.

Results

Fifty-eight% of the principals responding are from communities of fewer than 5,000 people, 21 percent from 5000 to 10,000, 9 percent from 10,000 to 50,000, 2 percent from 50,000 to 100,000 and 9 percent from 100,000 or more. Sixty-three percent of the principals represent smaller schools of 500 or fewer students.

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Almost two-thirds of these respondents have been a principal for more than ten years (65 percent). 23 percent from five to ten years and 12 percent fewer than five years

Table 1 Number of years as principal

Number of Years	Percentage
More than 10 years	65.1
5 to 10 years	23.3
Fewer than 5 years	11.6

Almost 56 percent of the principals reported having a current journalism class for credit. More than 95 percent reported having a student newspaper, almost 98 percent supporting yearbook, and six percent reported a literary magazine.

Table 2 Current journalism program

Journalism program	Percentage
Journalism course for credit	55.8
High school produces newspaper	95.3
High school produces yearbook	97.7
High school produces literary magazine	14.0

Of the ninety percent of schools producing a student newspaper, almost 47 percent publish weekly and almost 26 percent publish monthly. More than 63 percent publish in a page in the local paper.

When asked about other dealings with the local newspaper

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51 percent reported that the local newspaper published high school student articles or photographs, while slightly more than nine percent reported that the local newspaper had high school student interns. More than 11 percent of the principals reported that the local newspaper provided speakers, more than 11 percent reported funding and equipment, 7 percent reported locally sponsored contests, and slightly more than 2 percent reported scholarships sponsored by the local newspaper.

When asked which of the listed relationships they would like to have or to continue, almost 42 percent wanted high school interns in the local newspaper and almost 63 percent wanted the local newspaper to publish student articles and photographs. Additionally, slightly more than 37 percent wanted local newspaper sponsored scholarships, more then 39 percent wanted funds and equipment, almost 42 percent wanted speakers, and almost 28 percent wanted local newspaper sponsored contests.

Table 3. Current and desired relationships with local newspaper

Relationships	Current	Desired
Page in the local newspaper	65.1	57.4
High school interns	9.3	41.9
Publishes student work	51.2	62.8
Sponsors scholarships	2.3	37.2
Provides funds and/or equipment	11.6	39.5
Provides speakers	11.6	41.9
Sponsors contests	7.0	11.6

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The principals were asked to identify sources of funding for the newspaper. Though a majority (65 percent) are funded in part by administration, almost 35 percent are funded by ad sales, student activity funds and funding activities.

When asked if the principal had worked on a high school publication, almost 49 percent said yes. The 51 percent who said no, said they had not worked on their high school publication because they were not interested (55 percent) or didn't have spare time (23 percent).

Table 5. Principal's with high school journalism experience

Experience	Percentage
Worked on high school publication	48.8
Of those who worked on h.s. publication:	
Worked on newspaper	25.6
Worked on yearbook	39.5

Of the 49 percent who reported working on a high school student publication, 26 percent said they worked on the newspaper, 40 percent worked on the yearbook, and a little more than two percent worked on a literary magazine.

Table 6 Principals without high school journalism experience

Why not	Percentage
Without experience	51.2
Reasons why not	
Not interested	27.9
Not enough time	11.6
No answer	11.6

The ninety percent who said they had worked on a high school publication were asked how valuable that experience had been. Fifty-four percent said that the experience was valuable. Six percent said extremely valuable, 14 percent very valuable, and 23 percent fairly valuable.

Table 7 Evaluation of high school journalism experience

Value	Percentage
Extremely valuable	9.5
Very valuable	14.3
Valuable	54.8
Fairly valuable	23.8

Analysis

With these findings in mind, an analysis was designed to see if there is some measure of association between certain attributes such as the principal's own high school journalism experience and the principal's response to statements about

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the value of high school journalism and the rights and responsibilities of the student journalist.

The statements section of the questionnaire was intended to prompt the principals to take a position on the value of high school journalism to the high school student and on the rights and responsbilities of the student journalist. The statements were generated from scholastic journalism issues identified by Dvorak (1985), Click (1977), Nelson (1974) and Windhauser and Click (1972) and pretested using journalism educators. Each statement was followed by a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Before analyzing the data provided by responses to the statements, the statements were clustered into categories of value and rights. One concern in attempting to group statements into categories is how well do the statements reflect the category. In other words, how reliable is the clustering process.

Using reliability analysis, each group of statements was tested to see how well suited they were to forming the scales of value and rights. The analysis computes the Cronbach's alpha which is the most commonly used coefficient of reliability. The scaling procedure used in this study was to remove statements from the scale to obtain an alpha of .70 which on a scale with a high of 1.0 is considered a high alpha in social science research. Statements which correlated poorly with others were

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removed.

Next, to identify relationships between specified attributes and the value of high school journalism and the rights and responsibilities of the student journalist, crosstabulation tables were produced using SPSSx, social science statistical package. The tables produced looked at such relationships as the principal's years as an administrator, the principal's own high school journalism experience and the principal's responses to the scales for value and rights.

The interpretation of the strength of the relationship is the proportionate reduction in error (PRE) measure of association. The PRE was used in this analysis instead of the Chi square statistic or one of the Chi square based measures of association because their interpretation tends to be linked to previous research. How the statistic is interpreted, that is whether a relationship is weak, moderate or strong depends on prior research and relationships. The Chi square itself is also affected by sample size.

However, PRE measures have strict interpretations not dependent on sample size or previous research. The proportionate reduction in error measures of asociation indicate how much we can reduce the error in predicting a variable's values from knowledge of the other variable's value. A PRE measure of 0 indicates there is no reduction in error and that one variable doesn't help in predicting or explaining the other. A measure of 1 indicates 100 percent reduction in error and knowledge of one

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variable leads to a perfect prediction of the other.

The PRE measure used in this analysis is Lambda with a range from 0 to 1. Using the years of experience as a high school principal as the predicting variable for value of high school journalism, a Lambda of 0 indicates that the years of experience can't be used to predict the principal's responses to value. The table suggests that whether a principal for 5 to 10 years or for more than 10 years, the principals place a high value on high school journalism.

Table 8. CROSSTABULATION OF PYRSAD NUMBER OF YEARS AS PRINCIPAL BY VALUE

PYRSAD	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	VALUE: Not Sure 3.00	Agree 4.00	Strongly Agree 5.00	ROW TOTAL
5 to 10	1		7 46.7 36.8	8 53.3 34.8	15 34.9
MORE THAN 10	3	1 3.6 100.0	12 42.9 63.2	15 53.6 65.2	28 65.1
	COLUMN TOTAL	1 2.3	19 44.2	23 53.5	43 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F. < 5
0.56790	2	0.7528	0.349	2 OF 6 (33.3%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PYRSAD DEPENDENT	WITH VALUE DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.00000	0.00000	0.00000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.01448	0.01600	0.01322
SOMERS' D	-0.01335	-0.01253	-0.01429
ETA		0.11492	0.02918

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Using the years as a high school principal as predicting variable for principal responses to rights of the high school journalist, once again a Lambda of 0 indicates that years as a principal can't be used to predict a principal's response to rights of the student journalist. Table 9 shows 63.4 percent of both categories are supportive of high school journalist rights.

Table 9.

CROSSTABULATION OF PYRSAD NUMBER OF YEARS AS PRINCIPAL BY RIGHTS

PYRSAD	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	RIGHTS Disagree 2.00	Not Sure 3.00	Agree 4.00	Strongly Agree 5.00	ROW TOTAL
5 to 10	1	2 13.3 28.6	3 20.0 42.9	10 66.7 38.5		15 36.6
MORE THAN 10	3	5 19.2 71.4	4 15.4 57.1	16 61.5 61.5	1 3.8 100.0	26 63.4
	COLUMN TOTAL	7 17.1	7 17.1	26 63.4	1 2.4	41 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
0.92882	3	0.8185	0.366	6 OF 8 (75.0%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PYRSAD DEPENDENT	WITH RIGHTS DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.00000	0.00000	0.00000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.01885	0.02354	0.01572
SOMERS' D	-0.00474	-0.00442	-0.00513
ETA		0.15051	0.02007

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Knowing whether the principal worked on a high school publication can help predict how the principal values high school journalism 28 percent of the time (Lambda .28). Once again, the principal's value high school journalism highly. As a predictor for rights, the Lambda of .14 indicates that knowing whether the principal worked on a high school publication yields a 14 percent prediction rate. Table 11 shows that the majority of principals who worked on a high school publication are supportive of high school journalist rights.

Table 10.

CROSSTABULATION OF PSTUPUB DID PRINCIPAL WORK ON HS PUBLICATION BY VALUE

PSTUPUB	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	VALUE Not Sure 3.00	Agree 4.00	Strongly Agree 5.00	ROW TOTAL
YES	1		12 57.1 63.2	9 42.9 39.1	21 48.8
NO	2	1 4.5 100.0	7 31.8 36.8	14 63.6 60.9	22 51.2
	COLUMN TOTAL	1 2.3	19 44.2	23 53.5	43 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
3.38132	2	0.1844	0.488	2 OF 6 (33.3%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PSTUPUB DEPENDENT	WITH VALUE DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.19512	0.23810	0.15000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.05972	0.06361	0.05628
SOMERS' D	0.17853	0.17537	0.18182
ETA		0.28042	0.14906

Table 11.

CROSSTABULATION OF PSTUPUB DID PRINCIPAL WORK ON HS PUBLICATION BY RIGHTS

PSTUPUB	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	RIGHTS Disagree 2.00	Not Sure 3.00	Agree 4.00	Strongly Agree 5.00	ROW TOTAL
YES	1	4 19.0 57.1	6 28.6 85.7	11 52.4 42.3		21 51.2
NO	2	3 15.0 42.9	1 5.0 14.3	15 75.0 57.7	1 5.0 100.0	20 48.8
	COLUMN TOTAL	7 17.1	7 17.1	26 63.4	1 2.4	41 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
5.30844	3	0.1506	0.488	6 OF 8 (75.0%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PSTUPUB DEPENDENT	WITH RIGHTS DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.14286	0.25000	0.00000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.06857	0.10711	0.07550
SOMERS' D	0.25888	0.24945	0.26905
ETA		0.35983	0.22908

Knowing whether the high school principal worked on a high school newspaper can help predict the principal's responses to value of high school journalism (Lambda of .20) 20 percent of the time and can help predict the principal's responses to rights of the high school journalist (Lambda of .25) 25 percent of the ti

Table 12.

CROSSTABULATION OF PHSNWP PRINCIPAL WORKED ON HS NEWSPAPER BY VALUE

PHSNWP	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	VALUE Agree 4.00	Strongly Agree 5.00	ROW TOTAL
YES	1	5 45.5 41.7	6 54.5 66.7	11 52.4
NO	2	7 70.0 58.3	3 30.0 33.3	10 47.6
	COLUMN TOTAL	12 57.1	8 42.9	21 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
0.48125	1	0.4879	4.286	2 OF 4 (50.0%)
1.28864	1	0.2563	(BEFORE YATES CORRECTION)	

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PHSNWP DEPENDENT	WITH VALUE DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.15789	0.20000	0.11111
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.04526	0.04496	0.04556
SOMERS' D	-0.24771	-0.25000	-0.24545
ETA		0.24772	0.24772

Table 13.

CROSSTABULATION OF PHSNWP PRINCIPAL WORKED ON HS NEWSPAPER BY RIGHTS

PHSNWP	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	RIGHTS Disagree 2.00	Not Sure 3.00	Agree 4.00	ROW TOTAL
1 YES		1 9.1 25.0	2 18.2 33.3	8 72.7 72.7	11 52.4
2 NO		3 30.0 75.0	4 40.0 66.7	3 30.0 27.3	10 47.6
	COLUMN TOTAL	4 19.0	6 28.6	11 52.4	21 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
3.90062	2	0.1422	1.905	4 OF 6 (66.7%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PHSNWP DEPENDENT	WITH RIGHTS DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.25000	0.40000	0.10000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.11278	0.13889	0.09493
SOMERS' D	-0.40164	-0.36567	-0.44545
ETA		0.43098	0.40922

Knowing whether the high school principal worked on a high school yearbook provides no help in predicting the principal's evaluation of high school journalism (Lambda of 0) and provides only minimal help in predicting the prinicpal's evaluation of the rights of high school journalists (Lambda .07).

Table 14.

CROSSTABULATION OF PHSYRB PRINCIPAL WORKED ON HS YEARBOOK BY VALUE

PHSYRB	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	VALUE Agree 4.00	Strongly Agree 5.00	ROW TOTAL
YES	1	10 58.8 83.3	7 41.2 77.8	17 81.0
NO	2	2 50.0 16.7	2 50.0 22.2	4 19.0
	COLUMN TOTAL	12 57.1	9 42.9	21 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
0.00000	1	1.0000	1.714	2 OF 4 (50.0%)
0.10294	1	0.7483	(BEFORE YATES CORRECTION)	

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PHSYRB DEPENDENT	WITH VALUE DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.00000	0.00000	0.00000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.00416	0.00500	0.00356
SOMERS' D	0.06818	0.05856	0.08824
ETA		0.07001	0.07001

Table 15. CROSSTABULATION OF PHSYRB PRINCIPAL WORKED ON HS YEARBOOK BY RIGHTS

PHSYRB	COUNT / ROW PCT / COL PCT	RIGHTS Disagree 2.00	Not Sure 3.00	Agree 4.00	ROW TOTAL
YES	1	3 17.6 75.0	4 23.5 66.7	10 58.8 90.9	17 81.0
NO	2	1 25.0 25.0	2 50.0 33.3	1 25.0 9.1	4 19.0
	COLUMN TOTAL	4 19.0	6 28.6	11 52.4	21 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
1.59325	2	0.4508	0.762	5 OF 6 (83.3%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PHSYRB DEPENDENT	WITH RIGHTS DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.07143	0.00000	0.10000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.05118	0.07880	0.03790
SOMERS' D	-0.20792	-0.15672	-0.30882
ETA		0.27544	0.20819

Knowing how principals rate their own high school publication experience can help predict how they value high school journalism today 16 percent of the time and how supportive they are of high school student rights 10 percent of the time.

Table 16.

CROSSTABULATION OF PVALUE PRINCIPAL VALUATION OF HS PUB EXP BY VALUE

PVALUE	VALUE 4.00 Agree	VALUE 5.00 Strongly Agree	ROW TOTAL
1 EXTREMELY VALUAB	1 20.0 8.3	4 80.0 44.4	5 23.8
3 VALUABLE	6 54.5 50.0	5 45.5 55.6	11 52.4
4 FAIRLY VALUABLE	5 100.0 41.7		5 23.8
COLUMN TOTAL	12 57.1	9 42.9	21 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
6.59697	2	0.0369	2.143	5 OF 6 (83.3%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PVALUE DEPENDENT	WITH VALUE DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.15789	0.00000	0.33333
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.23795	0.19847	0.29705
SOMERS' D	-0.52675	-0.59259	-0.47407
ETA		0.52931	0.56048

Table 17. CROSSTABULATION OF PVALUE PRINCIPAL VALUATION OF HS PUB EXP BY RIGHTS

PVALUE	RIGHTS Disagree 2.00	Not Sure 3.00	Agree 4.00	ROW TOTAL
1 EXTREMELY VALUAB			5 100.0 45.5	5 23.8
3 VALUABLE	4 36.4 100.0	3 27.3 50.0	4 36.4 36.4	11 52.4
4 FAIRLY VALUABLE		3 60.0 50.0	2 40.0 18.2	5 23.8
COLUMN TOTAL	4 19.0	6 28.6	11 52.4	21 100.0

CHI-SQUARE	D.F.	SIGNIFICANCE	MIN E.F.	CELLS WITH E.F.< 5
9.64959	4	0.0468	0.952	8 OF 9 (88.9%)

STATISTIC	SYMMETRIC	WITH PVALUE DEPENDENT	WITH RIGHTS DEPENDENT
LAMBDA	0.10000	0.10000	0.10000
UNCERTAINTY COEFFICIENT	0.27649	0.27519	0.27780
SOMERS' D	-0.26766	-0.26866	-0.26667
ETA		0.50731	0.52315

Conclusions

Although this study finds some of the specified attributes to be somewhat useful in predicting how the principals respond to statements on the value of high school journalism to the high school student and on the rights and responsibilities of the high school journalist, the search for information to help in working closely with the high school principal should continue.

One of the reasons for smaller percentages and for a lack of predictability in this study is the skewedness of the responses. It is highly unlikely that a similar survey conducted with a more widely sampled population of high school principals would produce such overwhelmingly positive results on the scales for value and rights. With so many responses clustered at the positive end of the scales, the range of predictability is admittedly quite narrow. Again, such a clustering would be highly unlikely in a larger and random sampling.

It would be useful to know, given a different distribution of the principal's own high school journalism experience and his evaluation of the experience would provide a higher percentage of predictability of his support for the high school journalism program. Other helpful information might include the principal's prior working experience with a high school journalism program, his mode of operation with other student groups.

When working closely with the high school principal, as the high school journalism teacher must be encouraged to do, it should be helpful to know as much as possible about the person--whether for prediction or for a solid basis for understanding.